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(54) **PYROPHORIC LIQUID IGNITION SYSTEM FOR PILOT BURNERS AND FLARE TIPS**

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F23Q 11/00 (2006.01)
F23N 5/10 (2006.01)
F23G 7/08 (2006.01)
F23Q 2/02 (2006.01)
F23Q 21/00 (2006.01)

(52) **U.S. Cl.**

CPC ***F23G 5/50*** (2013.01); ***F23G 7/085*** (2013.01); ***F23N 5/102*** (2013.01); ***F23Q 2/02*** (2013.01); ***F23Q 11/00*** (2013.01); ***F23Q 21/00*** (2013.01); *F23G 2207/101* (2013.01); *F23N 2027/00* (2013.01); *F23N 2027/22* (2013.01); *F23N 2027/40* (2013.01); *F23N 2041/18* (2013.01)

(58) **Field of Classification Search**

CPC F23G 5/50; F23Q 11/00; F23N 5/102
USPC 431/5, 202; 110/345
See application file for complete search history.

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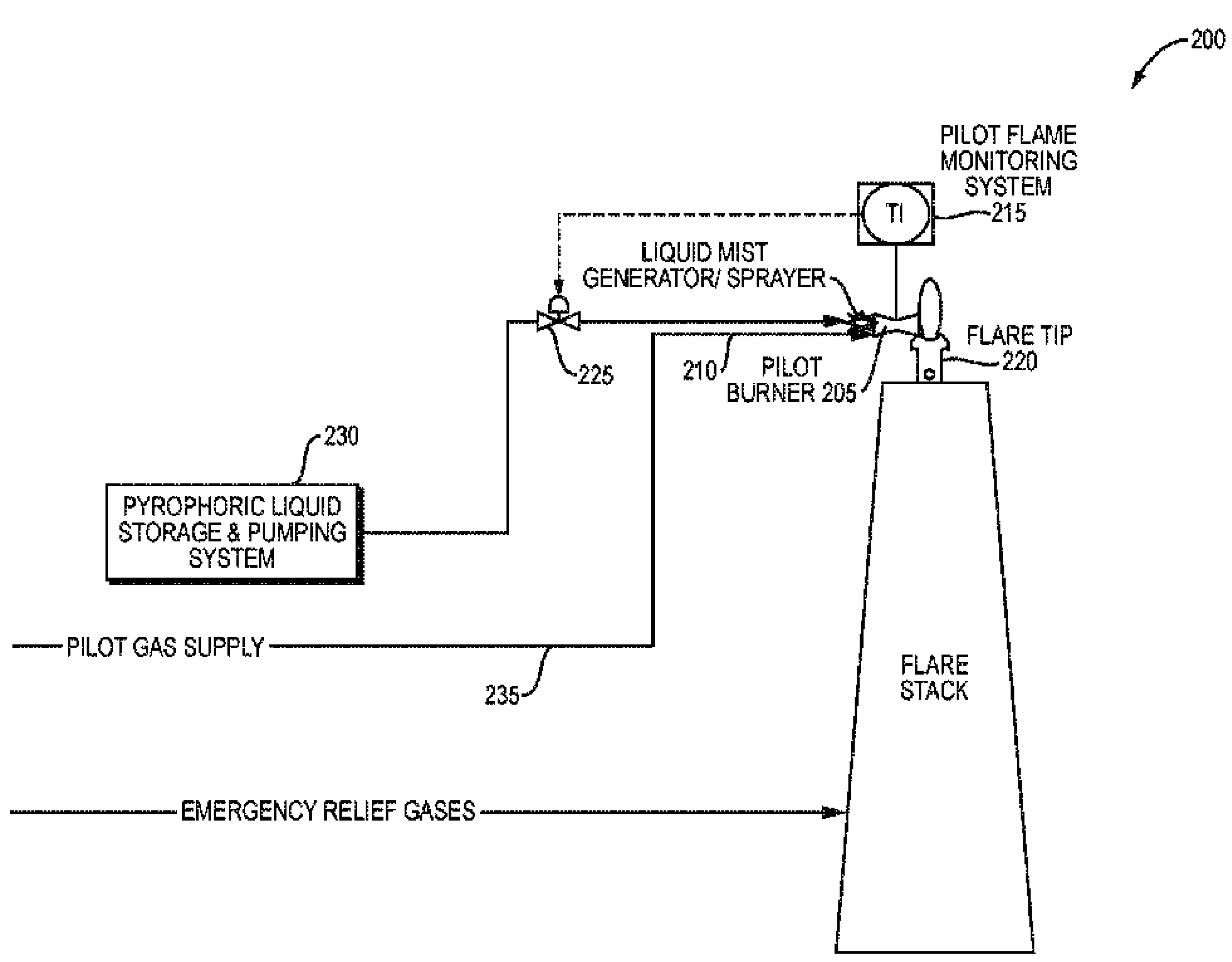
(57) **ABSTRACT**

Described herein are methods and systems for using pyrophoric liquids to ignite combustible gas.

28 Claims, 4 Drawing Sheets



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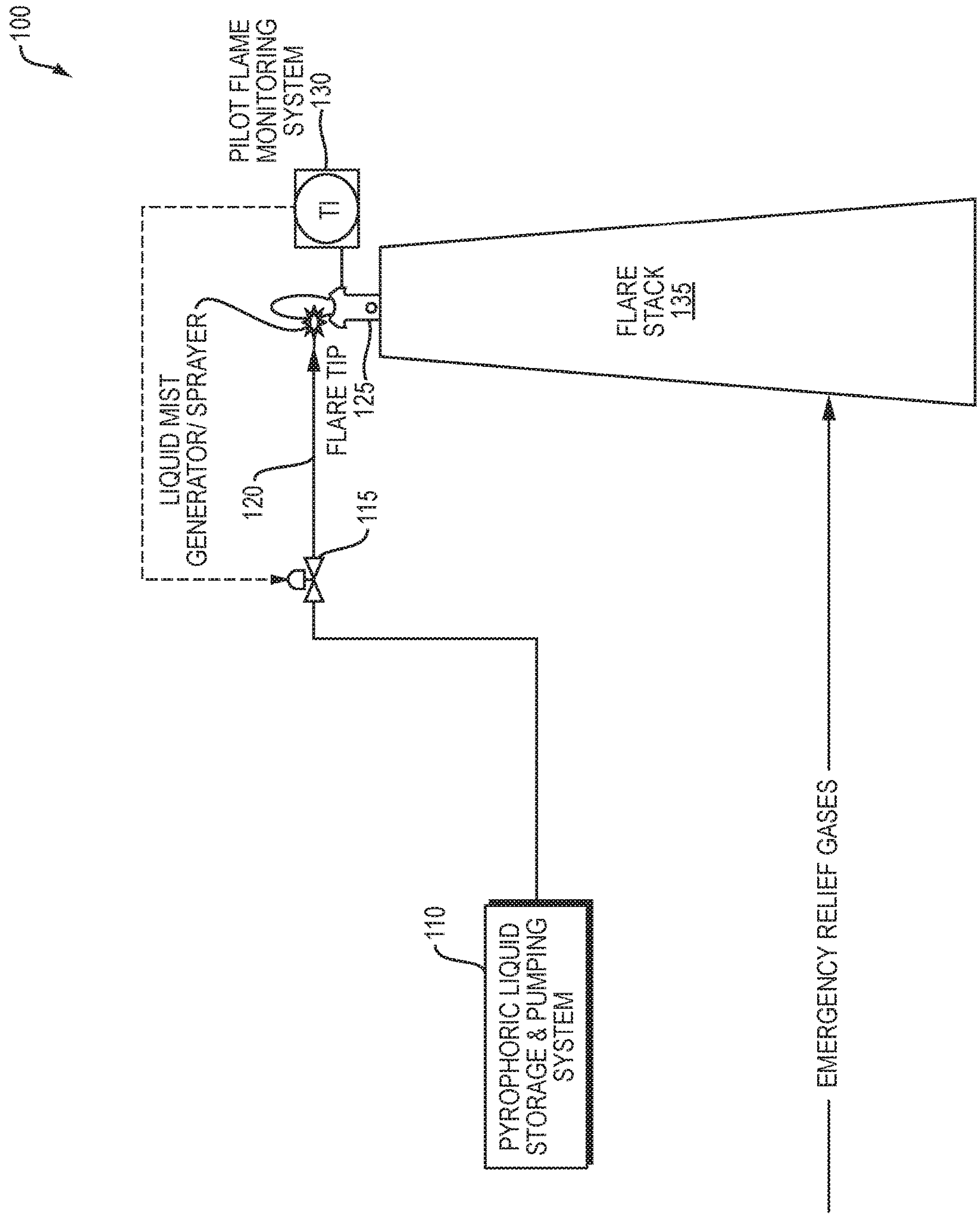

100
PILOT FLAME MONITORING SYSTEM
130
TI
LIQUID MIST GENERATOR/ SPRAYER
FLARE TIP
125
120
115
FLARE STACK
135
110
PYROPHORIC LIQUID STORAGE & PUMPING SYSTEM
EMERGENCY RELIEF GASES

FIG. 1

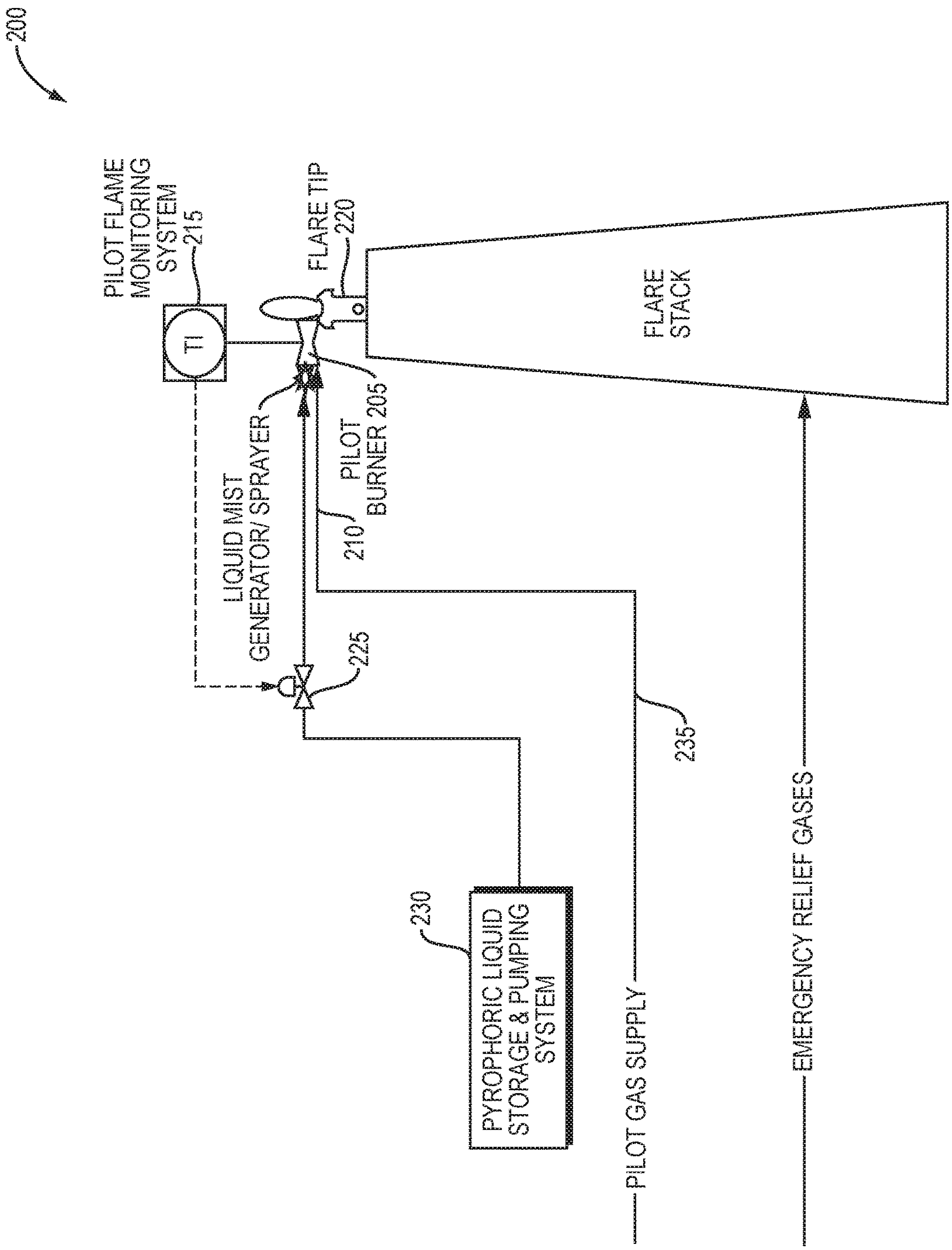

200
PILOT FLAME MONITORING SYSTEM 215
TI
FLARE TIP 220
FLARE STACK
LIQUID MIST GENERATOR/ SPRAYER
PILOT BURNER 205
210
225
235
230
PYROPHORIC LIQUID STORAGE & PUMPING SYSTEM
PILOT GAS SUPPLY
EMERGENCY RELIEF GASES

FIG. 2

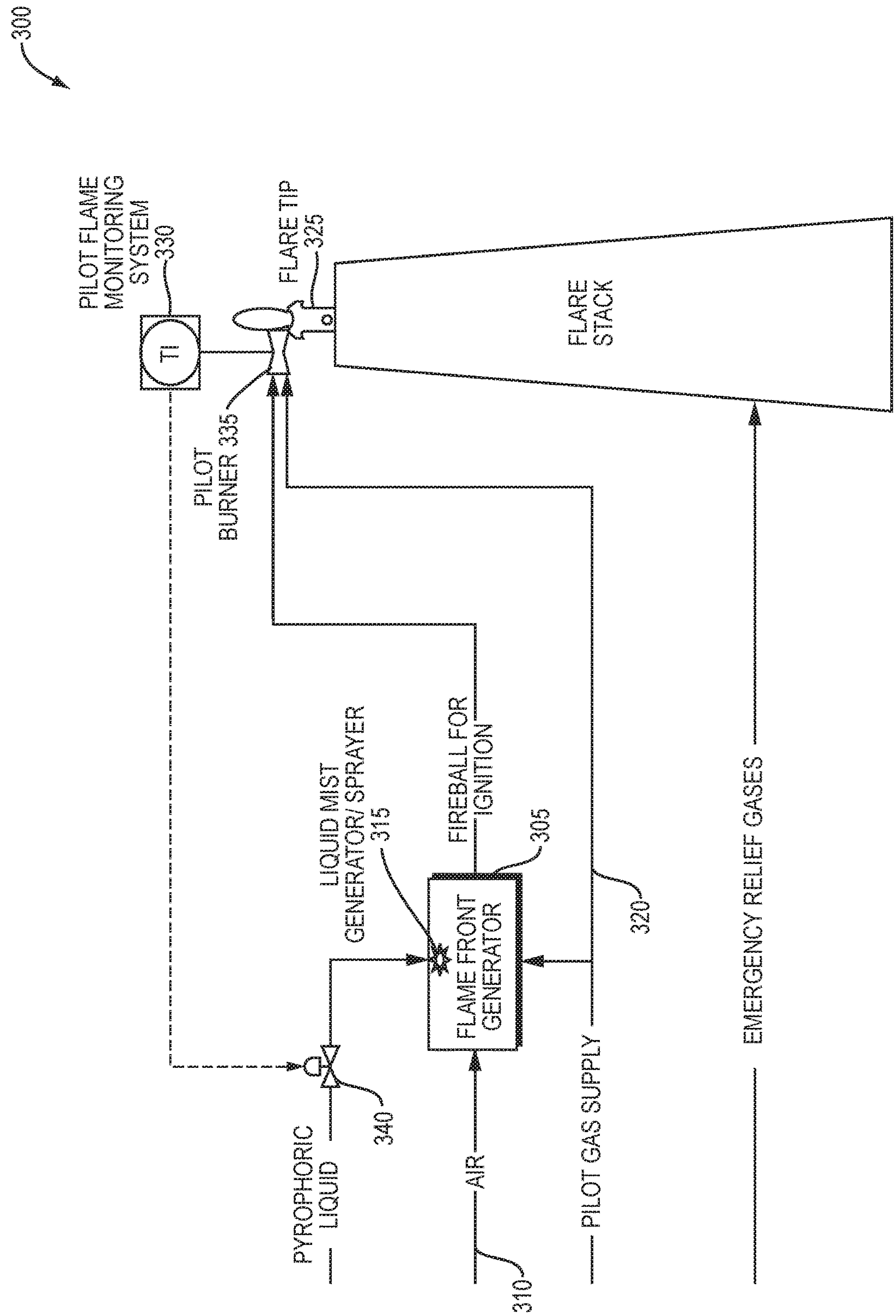
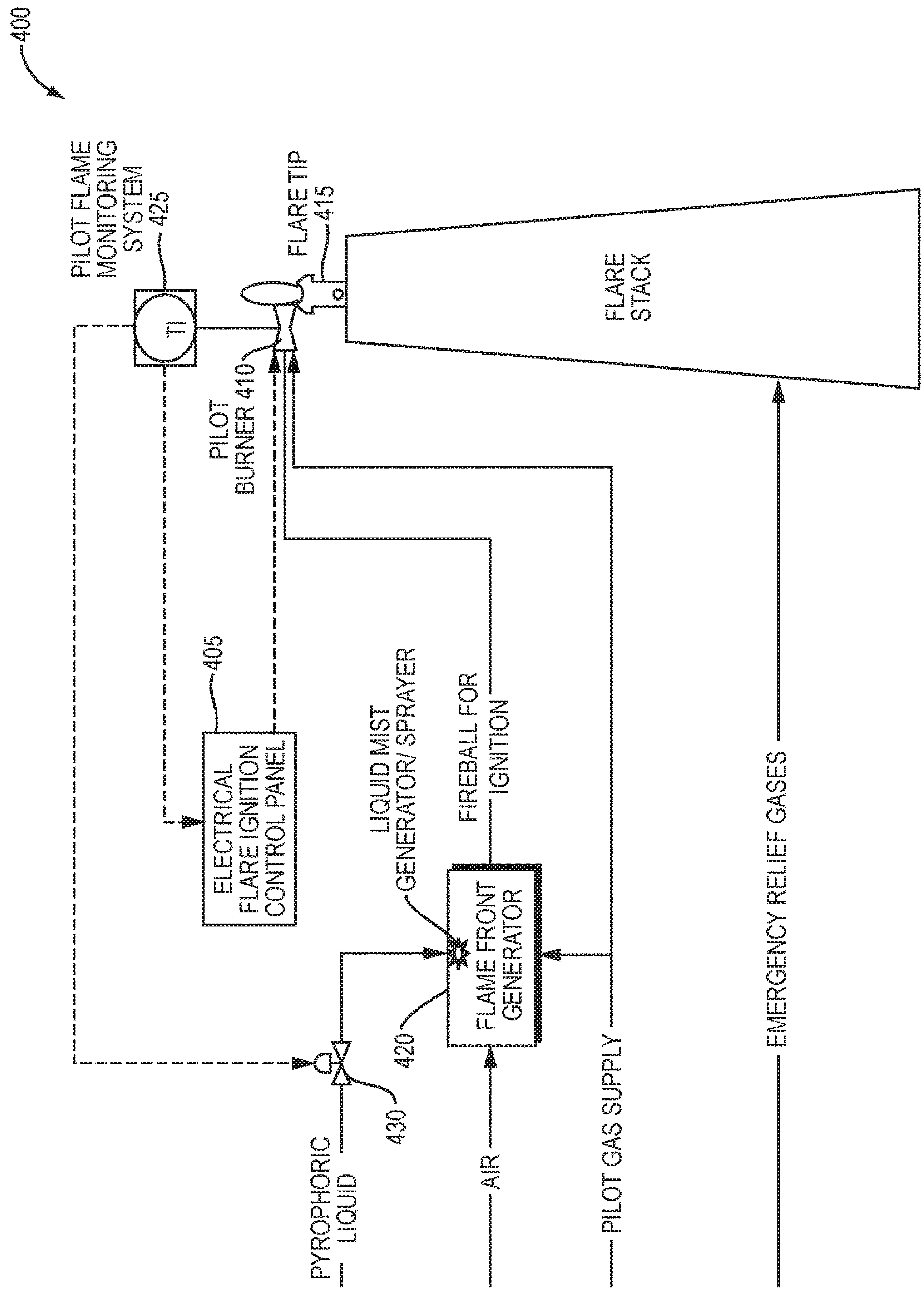

300
PILOT FLAME MONITORING SYSTEM 330
TI
FLARE TIP 325
FLARE STACK
PILOT BURNER 335
LIQUID MIST GENERATOR/ SPRAYER 315
FIREBALL FOR IGNITION
305
FLAME FRONT GENERATOR
320
EMERGENCY RELIEF GASES
PYROPHORIC LIQUID
340
AIR
310
PILOT GAS SUPPLY

FIG. 3



400
PILOT FLAME MONITORING SYSTEM 425
TI
FLARE TIP 415
FLARE STACK
PILOT BURNER 410
405
ELECTRICAL FLARE IGNITION CONTROL PANEL
LIQUID MIST GENERATOR/ SPRAYER
FIREBALL FOR IGNITION
FLAME FRONT GENERATOR
420
430
PYROPHORIC LIQUID
AIR
PILOT GAS SUPPLY
EMERGENCY RELIEF GASES

FIG. 4

PYROPHORIC LIQUID IGNITION SYSTEM FOR PILOT BURNERS AND FLARE TIPS

BACKGROUND

Flare stacks are gas combustion devices used in the oil refinery, chemical processing, and natural gas procurement industries for burning off flammable gases released during processing and procurement. During processing and procurement, combustible or natural gases can build up and be routed to a pressure release valve. When the pressure reaches a particular limit, or is otherwise opened via manual control, the gas travels through the piping in the stack to a flame located at the flare tip or the pilot light. Upon contact with the open flame, the gas will flare.

The gases that are flared tend to be waste gas, although it is possible that natural gases are flared when they cannot be recaptured and used during the refinery process. Gas flaring is important because it prevents natural and waste gases from escaping into the environment. Allowing these gases to simply escape into the environment risks harming the atmosphere (such as by methane gas, which is a greenhouse gas), or possibly poisoning nearby wildlife (such as by a sulfur-based gas). Flare stacks, therefore, play an important part in the refinery process.

SUMMARY

The present invention provides, among other things, methods and systems to address the problem of a flare tip extinguishing during routine use, for example methods and systems that ensure a flame is burning at the flare tip of a flare stack, or otherwise act as a back-up to ensure that a flame can be lit, should the normal lighting mechanism fail. Further, the present invention encompasses the recognition that operating flare stacks at colder temperatures can be problematic. For example, in cold weather environments, it is possible that wind could extinguish the flame, and cold weather may seize certain mechanisms used to re-light the flame.

Accordingly, the present disclosure provides, among other things, methods and systems for burning combustible waste gas using a pyrophoric liquid. In some embodiments, such methods and systems are useful in cold temperature conditions, such as −20° C., or −40° C. Using a pyrophoric liquid as a source of flame for the flare stack can avoid the pitfalls associated with known flare stacks.

In some embodiments, the present disclosure provides a method of burning a combustible waste gas, the method comprising:

exposing at least one pyrophoric liquid to air to create a flame;

contacting the flame with a pilot gas in the presence of a pilot burner to thereby ignite the pilot burner; and

exposing the combustible waste gas to the ignited pilot burner, thereby burning the combustible waste gas.

In some embodiments, the present disclosure provides a flare ignition system comprising:

a. a pyrophoric liquid storage unit configured to an injection system;

b. a flare tip; and

c. a detector configured to monitor a flame.

In some embodiments, the present disclosure provides a flare ignition system comprising:

a. a pyrophoric liquid storage unit configured to an injection system;

b. a flame front generator configured to receive air (or a source of oxygen) and at least one pyrophoric liquid from the injection system;

c. a flare tip; and

d. a detector configured to monitor a flame.

In some embodiments, the present disclosure provides a method comprising the steps of:

exposing at least one pyrophoric liquid to air to create a flame; and

igniting a flare stack or flare tip with the flame.

In some embodiments, the present disclosure provides a method of igniting a stream of combustible waste gas, the method comprising

exposing at least one pyrophoric liquid to air to thereby ignite a flame;

contacting the flame with a pilot gas in the presence of a pilot burner to thereby ignite the pilot burner; and

exposing the stream of combustible waste gas to the ignited pilot burner, thereby igniting the combustible waste gas.

In some embodiments, the present disclosure provides a method of igniting a stream of combustible waste gas, the method comprising

exposing at least one pyrophoric liquid to air to thereby ignite a flame; and

contacting the flame the combustible waste gas, thereby igniting the combustible waste gas.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWING

FIG. **1** is an illustration of a flare stack ignition system wherein the pyrophoric liquid storage unit provides pyrophoric liquid directly to the flare tip.

FIG. **2** is an illustration of a flare stack ignition system wherein the pyrophoric liquid storage unit provides pyrophoric liquid to a pilot burner.

FIG. **3** is an illustration of a flare stack ignition system comprising a flame front generator.

FIG. **4** is an illustration of a flare stack ignition system comprising both a flame front generator and a sparking mechanism.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF CERTAIN EMBODIMENTS

Definitions

The term "pyrophoric liquid," as used herein, refers to liquids that have the potential to spontaneously ignite upon exposure to oxygen (e.g., air) at temperatures of 55° C. or below (e.g., 0° C. or below, −20° C. or below, or −40° C. or below). Some pyrophoric liquids can also ignite upon exposure to water. Exemplary pyrophoric liquids include, but are not limited to, organometallics of main group metals, (e.g., aluminum, gallium, indium, zinc, and cadmium), organoboranes, and organolithiums. Suitable pyrophoric liquids useful in the methods and systems described herein include, but are not limited to alkylaluminum (e.g., triethylaluminum), alkyllithium, alkenyllithium, aryllithium, alkynyllithium, alkylzinc, and alkylborane (e.g., triethylborane).

The term "alkyl," as used herein, means an unbranched or branched chain, saturated, monovalent hydrocarbon residue containing 1 to 10 carbon atoms ("C_1-C_{10}"). Suitable alkyl groups include, without limitation, methyl, ethyl, n- and iso-propyl, n-, sec-, iso- and tert-butyl, neopentyl, and the like.

The term "alkenyl," as used herein, means a monovalent straight or branched chain group of, unless otherwise specified, from 2 to 10 carbon atoms ("C_2-C_{10}") containing one or more carbon-carbon double bonds. Suitable alkenyl groups include, without limitation, ethenyl, propenyl, butenyl, pentenyl, hexenyl, and the like.

The term "alkynyl," as used herein, means a monovalent straight or branched chain group from 2 to 10 carbon atoms ("C_2-C_{10}") containing at least one carbon-carbon triple bond. Suitable alkynyl groups include, without limitation, ethynyl, propynyl, butynyl, pentynyl, hexynyl, and the like.

The term "aryl," as used herein, means monocyclic and bicyclic ring systems having a total of six to fourteen ring members, wherein at least one ring in the system is aromatic. The term "aryl" may be used interchangeably with the term "aryl ring". In certain embodiments, "aryl" refers to an aromatic ring system which includes, but not limited to, phenyl, biphenyl, naphthyl, anthracyl, and the like, which may bear one or more substituents. Also included within the scope of the term "aryl", as it is used herein, is a group in which an aromatic ring is fused to one or more non-aromatic rings, such as indanyl, phthalimidyl, naphthimidyl, phenanthridinyl, or tetrahydronaphthyl, and the like.

The term "combustible gas," or "combustible waste gas," as used herein, refers to any gas that, when mixed with oxygen (e.g., air) and contacted with a flame, will ignite. Exemplary combustible gases include methane, pentane, propane, butane, hydrogen, and hydrogen sulfide.

Flare Ignition Systems

In some embodiments, the present disclosure provides methods and systems for burning combustible waste gas using a pyrophoric liquid. Accordingly, in some embodiments, the present disclosure provides a flare ignition system comprising:

a. a pyrophoric liquid storage unit configured to an injection system;
b. a flare tip; and
c. a detector configured to monitor a flame.

In some embodiments, the at least one pyrophoric liquid comprises at least one of an alkylaluminum, an alkyllithium, an alkenyllithium, an aryllithium, an alkynyllithium, an alkylzinc, and an alkylborane. In some embodiments the at least one pyrophoric liquid comprises at least one of an alkylaluminum and an alkylborane. In some embodiments, the at least one pyrophoric liquid comprises triethylaluminum, triethylborane, or a combination thereof. In some embodiments, the at least one pyrophoric liquid comprises a mixture of triethylaluminum and triethylborane.

For example, as seen in FIG. **1**, a flare ignition system **100** comprises: a pyrophoric liquid storage unit **110** containing at least one pyrophoric liquid; an injection system **120**; a flare tip **125**; and a detector **130** configured to monitor a flame. The injection system **120** is configured such that it can pump or otherwise cause the release of the at least one pyrophoric liquid from a pyrophoric liquid storage unit **110** to a flare tip **125**. The pyrophoric liquid, upon exposure to the air will ignite, generating a flame.

The flare ignition system **100** in FIG. **1** is configured to a flare stack **135**. The flare stack is configured to receive waste combustible gas or other emergency relief gases that are combustible. In typical refinery processes, waste or natural gases will travel through a pipeline to and through a flare stack **135**, where they are exposed to the outside air at a flare tip **125**. If a flame is present at a flare tip **125**, a combustible gas will ignite, burning the gas off before it enters the atmosphere.

In some embodiments, as also seen in FIG. **1**, a flare ignition system further comprises a control valve **115** configured to an injection system **120**. In some embodiments, a control valve **115** is configured to receive a signal from a detector **130** or another source (e.g., a signal received from a terminal operated by a human). A signal sent to a control valve **115** will cause an injection system **120** to pump or otherwise cause the release of the at least one pyrophoric liquid.

In some embodiments, a detector **130** is configured to monitor a flame at a flare tip **125**. In certain embodiments, a detector **130** monitors the flame via a thermocouple sensor capable of measuring temperature, an infrared sensor capable of measuring infrared radiation, a closed circuit television monitoring the flame, an ultraviolet sensor capable of measuring ultraviolet radiation, a flame ionization detector capable of measuring organic species in a gas stream, or any combination of thereof. In some embodiments, a detector **130** comprises a thermocouple sensor capable of measuring temperature. In some embodiments, a detector **130** comprises an infrared sensor capable of measuring infrared radiation. A detector **130**, measuring a change in temperature or a change in infrared radiation, will send a signal to a control valve **115**, thereby causing an injection system **120** to pump or otherwise cause the release of pyrophoric liquid from a pyrophoric liquid storage unit **110** to a flare tip **125**.

FIG. **2** is an illustration of a flare ignition system comprising a pilot burner. As seen in FIG. **2**, in some embodiments, a flare ignition system **200** comprises a pilot burner **205** configured adjacent to an injection system **210**. In some embodiments, a pilot burner is configured to receive pilot gas from a pilot gas inlet pipe **235**, thereby causing the pilot burner to comprise a flame that is continuously lit (until the pilot gas, combustible gas, or any suitable fuel is exhausted). When an ignition system **200** comprises a pilot burner, a detector **215** is configured to monitor either a pilot burner **205** or a flare tip **220**, or both. Similar to the configuration illustrated in FIG. **1**, if a detector **215** measures a change in, for example, temperature or infrared radiation, a signal is sent to a control valve **225**, thereby causing an injection system **210** to pump or otherwise cause the release of pyrophoric liquid from a pyrophoric liquid storage unit **230** to either a pilot burner **205** or a flare tip **220**.

In some embodiments, the present disclosure provides a flare ignition system comprising:

a. a pyrophoric liquid storage unit configured to an injection system;
b. a flame front generator configured to receive oxygen (e.g., air) and at least one pyrophoric liquid from a pyrophoric liquid mist generator;
c. a flare tip; and
d. a detector configured to monitor a flame,

wherein, in some embodiments, the at least one pyrophoric liquid is defined above.

FIG. **3** is an illustration of an ignition system **300** comprising a flame front generator **305**. The flame front generator **305** is configured to receive a source of air **310** (or in some embodiments, a source of oxygen) and at least one pyrophoric liquid from an injection system **315**. In some embodiments, a flame front generator can also receive a pilot gas supply **320**.

Pyrophoric liquid can be housed in a pyrophoric liquid storage unit (not pictured) and pumped into a flame front generator **305** via an injection system **315**. Upon exposure of pyrophoric liquid to oxygen or air with a flame front generator **305**, a flame can be ignited, and travel to a flare tip **325**.

Similar to the exemplary embodiment rendered in FIG. **1**, the embodiment rendered in FIG. **3** comprises a detector

330. A detector **330** is configured to monitor a flame at a flare tip **325** or a pilot burner **335**. A detector **330** can monitor a flame by monitoring changes in temperature (e.g., by a thermocouple temperature sensor) or in infrared radiation. If a detector **330** recognizes a change, it can send a signal to a control valve **340**, thereby causing the injection system **315** to pump or otherwise cause the release of pyrophoric liquid into a flame front generator **305**.

It should be noted that, while the flare ignition system of FIG. **3** comprises a pilot burner **335**, a person of skill in the art would understand that this embodiment, like the embodiment rendered in FIG. **1**, can also be constructed without a pilot burner.

FIG. **4** is an illustration of a flare ignition system **400** comprising a sparking mechanism **405**. It should be understood that any embodiment described herein may optionally comprise a sparking mechanism, such as the exemplary embodiments described with respect to FIGS. **1** and **2**. A sparking mechanism **405** (e.g., an electrical flare ignition, optionally with control panel) provides an electrical spark to, for example, a pilot burner **410**, a flare tip **415**, or a flame front generator **420**.

In some embodiments, a detector **425** is configured to monitor either a pilot burner **410** (when present) or a flare tip **415**. Similar to the configuration illustrated in FIG. **3**, if a detector **425** measures a change in, for example, temperature or infrared radiation, a signal is sent to a control valve **430**, thereby causing an injection system **430** to pump or otherwise cause the release of pyrophoric liquid into a flame front generator. Additionally, in some embodiments, a detector **425** is configured to send a signal to a sparking mechanism **405** when a detector **425** measures a change in, for example, temperature or infrared radiation. A signal received by a sparking mechanism **405** causes a sparking mechanism to light a flame at a pilot burner **410** or a flare tip **415**.

In some embodiments, flare ignition systems described herein do not comprise a sparking mechanism.

In some embodiments, the present disclosure provides a flare stack comprising any of the flare ignition systems described herein.

In some embodiments, the present disclosure provides flare ignition systems configured to operate at a temperature of 0° C. or less. In some embodiments, a flare ignition system is configured to operate at a temperature of −20° C. or less. In some embodiments, the flare ignition system is configured to operate at a temperature of −40° C. or less.

Methods of Disposing of Waste Gas

The present disclosure also provides methods of disposing of waste gas through the use of pyrophoric liquids. Accordingly, in some embodiments, the present disclosure provides a method of burning a combustible waste gas, the method comprising

- exposing at least one pyrophoric liquid to oxygen (e.g., air) to create a flame;
- contacting the flame with a pilot gas in the presence of a pilot burner to thereby ignite the pilot burner; and
- exposing the combustible waste gas to the ignited pilot burner, thereby burning the combustible waste gas,

wherein the at least one pyrophoric liquid is defined above.

In some embodiments, the present disclosure provides a method comprising the steps of:

- exposing at least one pyrophoric liquid to air to create a flame; and
- igniting a flare stack/flare tip with the flame.

wherein the at least one pyrophoric liquid is defined above.

In some embodiments, the present disclosure provides a method of igniting a stream of combustible waste gas, the method comprising:

- exposing at least one pyrophoric liquid to air to thereby ignite a flame;
- contacting the flame with a pilot gas in the presence of a pilot burner to thereby ignite the pilot burner; and
- exposing the stream of combustible waste gas to the ignited pilot burner, thereby igniting the combustible waste gas.

wherein the at least one pyrophoric liquid is defined above.

In some embodiments, the present disclosure provides a method of igniting a stream of combustible waste gas, the method comprising:

- exposing at least one pyrophoric liquid to air to thereby ignite a flame;
- contacting the flame the combustible waste gas, thereby igniting the combustible waste gas.

wherein the at least one pyrophoric liquid is defined above.

The foregoing has been a description of certain non-limiting embodiments of the invention. Accordingly, it is to be understood that the embodiments of the invention herein described are merely illustrative of the application of the principles of the invention. Reference herein to details of the illustrated embodiments is not intended to limit the scope of the claims, which themselves recite those features regarded as essential to the invention.

It is contemplated that systems, devices, methods, and processes of the claimed invention encompass variations and adaptations developed using information from the embodiments described herein. Adaptation and/or modification of the systems, devices, methods, and processes described herein may be performed by those of ordinary skill in the relevant art.

Throughout the description, where articles, devices, and systems are described as having, including, or comprising specific components, or where processes and methods are described as having, including, or comprising specific steps, it is contemplated that, additionally, there are articles, devices, and systems of the present invention that consist essentially of, or consist of, the recited components, and that there are processes and methods according to the present invention that consist essentially of, or consist of, the recited processing steps.

It should be understood that the order of steps or order for performing certain action is immaterial so long as the invention remains operable. Moreover, two or more steps or actions may be conducted simultaneously.

It is contemplated that systems, devices, methods, and processes of the claimed invention encompass variations and adaptations developed using information from the embodiments described herein. Adaptation and/or modification of the systems, devices, methods, and processes described herein may be performed by those of ordinary skill in the relevant art.

Throughout the description, where articles, devices, and systems are described as having, including, or comprising specific components, or where processes and methods are described as having, including, or comprising specific steps, it is contemplated that, additionally, there are articles, devices, and systems of the present invention that consist essentially of, or consist of, the recited components, and that there are processes and methods according to the present invention that consist essentially of, or consist of, the recited processing steps.

It should be understood that the order of steps or order for performing certain action is immaterial so long as the invention remains operable. Moreover, two or more steps or actions may be conducted simultaneously.

The invention claimed is:

1. A method of burning a combustible waste gas, the method comprising exposing at least one pyrophoric liquid to air to create a flame;

contacting the flame with a pilot gas in the presence of a pilot burner to thereby ignite the pilot burner; and

exposing the combustible waste gas to the ignited pilot burner, thereby burning the combustible waste gas.

2. The method of claim **1**, wherein the at least one pyrophoric liquid comprises at least one of an alkylaluminum, an alkyllithium, an alkenyllithium, an aryllithium, an alkynyllithium, an alkylzinc, and an alkylborane.

3. The method of claim **2**, wherein the at least one pyrophoric liquid comprises at least one of an alkylaluminum and an alkylborane.

4. The method of claim **3**, wherein the at least one pyrophoric liquid comprises triethylaluminum, triethylborane, or a combination thereof.

5. The method of claim **4**, wherein the at least one pyrophoric liquid comprises a mixture of triethylaluminum and triethylborane.

6. A flare ignition system comprising:

a. a pyrophoric liquid storage unit containing at least one pyrophoric liquid configured to an injection system, which exposes the pyrophoric liquid to air;

b. a flare tip; and

c. a detector configured to monitor a flame.

7. The flare ignition system of claim **6** further comprising:

d. a control valve configured to the injection system.

8. The flare ignition system of claim **7**, wherein the control valve is configured to receive a signal from the detector.

9. The flare ignition system of claim **8**, wherein the signal from the detector to the control valve causes the injection system to pump at least one pyrophoric liquid.

10. The flare ignition system of claim **8**, wherein the detector comprises at least one of a thermocouple temperature sensor capable of measuring temperature and an infrared sensor capable of measuring infrared radiation.

11. The flare ignition system of claim **10**, wherein a change in temperature causes the detector to send a signal to the pyrophoric liquid control valve.

12. The flare ignition system of claim **10**, wherein a change in infrared radiation causes the detector to send a signal to the pyrophoric liquid control valve.

13. A flare stack comprising the flare ignition system of claim **6**.

14. The flare ignition system of claim **6**, wherein the flare ignition system does not comprise a sparking mechanism.

15. The flare ignition system of claim **7**, further comprising:

e. a pilot burner configured adjacent to the injection system; and

f. a pilot gas inlet pipe connected to the pilot burner.

16. The flare ignition system of claim **15**, further comprising a sparking mechanism.

17. The flare ignition system of claim **16**, wherein the sparking mechanism is configured adjacent to the flare tip.

18. A flare ignition system comprising:

a. a pyrophoric liquid storage unit configured to an injection system;

b. a flame front generator configured to receive air and at least one pyrophoric liquid from the injection system;

c. a flare tip; and

d. a detector configured to monitor a flame.

19. The flare ignition system of claim **18** further comprising:

e. a control valve configured to the injection system.

20. The flare ignition system of claim **19**, wherein the control valve is configured to receive a signal from the detector.

21. The flare ignition system of claim **20**, wherein the signal from the detector to the control valve causes the injection system to pump the at least one pyrophoric liquid.

22. The flare ignition system of claim **19**, wherein the detector comprises at least one of a thermocouple temperature sensor capable of measuring temperature and an infrared sensor capable of measuring infrared radiation.

23. The flare ignition system of claim **22**, wherein a change in temperature causes the detector to send a signal to the pyrophoric liquid control valve.

24. The flare ignition system of claim **22**, wherein a change in infrared radiation causes the detector to send a signal to the pyrophoric control valve.

25. The flare ignition system of claim **19**, further comprising:

f. a pilot burner configured to the flame front generator; and

g. a pilot gas inlet pipe connected to the pilot burner.

26. The flare ignition system of claim **25**, further comprising a sparking mechanism.

27. The flare ignition system of claim **26**, wherein the sparking mechanism is configured adjacent to the flare tip.

28. The flare ignition system of claim **26**, wherein the sparking mechanism is configured to the flame front generator.

* * * * *